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ABSTRACT

Studies based on models of interpersonal coorientation have discovered regularities in communication behavior that coorientation theory cannot explain. On the other hand, rules-based theories of communication contain explanatory concepts seemingly applicable to these phenomena, but have not been articulated sufficiently to be applied to the complex patterns of self-other-object relations differentiated by models of coorientation. A synthesis of coorientation and rules theories is appropriate. The concept of a "logical force" in communication--a central concept in one rules theory--permits reconceptualization of the four "states" in K.R. Stamm and W.B. Pearce's process model of coorientation, and thus subsumes coorientation in a more comprehensive model of interpersonal interaction in conversation. Further, the inclusion of coorientation in the rules theory provides an increased sophistication in the conceptualization of "logical force." The synthesis of these theories suggests the hypothesis that persons develop rules for meaning and acting in particular coorientational states. A pilot study involving 21 college students illustrates a way of defining these theoretical concepts operationally and suggests a protocol for research. (Author/GT

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COMMUNICATION RULES AND COORIENTATIONAL STATES:

A SYNTHESIS AND EXTENSION OF TWO THEORIES

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ABSTRACT

Studies based on models of interpersonal coorientation have discovered regularities in communication behavior which coorientation theory cannot explain. On the other hand, rules-based theories of communication contain explanatory concepts seemingly applicable to these phenomena, but have not yet been articulated sufficiently to be applied to the complex patterns of self-other-object relations differentiated by models of coorientation. Since coorientation and rules theories make comparable metatheoretical assumptions, a synthesis is appropriate. In fact, this synthesis extends both theories. The concept of a "logical force" in communication--a central concept in one rules theory, the "coordinated management of meaning"--permits reconceptualization of the four "states" in Stamm and Pearce's process model of coorientation, and thus subsumes coorientation in a more comprehensive model of interpersonal interaction in conversation. Further, the inclusion of coorientation in the rules theory provides an increased sophistication in the conceptualization of "logical force." The synthesis of these theories suggests the hypothesis that persons develop rules for meaning and acting in particular coorientational states, thus the sequence of messages in a conversation is a function both of the rules for how to interpret/respond to the previous message and rules for how to act given particular coorientational states. Although the manipulation of the independent variable failed, a pilot study is reported as a way of defining these theoretical concepts operationally and as a suggested protocol for research.

COMMUNICATION RULES AND COORIENTATIONAL STATES:

A SYNTHESIS AND EXTENSION OF TWO THEORIES

This paper reports an integration of two theories, both of which have value in explaining some aspects of interpersonal communication. The theory of coorientation has developed primarily by refining models of the self-other-object system, and has been particularly useful in differentiating a number of interpersonal "states" in which conversants have substantive disagreements and/or are not fully predictable to each other. Communication theories based on the construct "rule" have developed primarily by conceptual analysis of explanatory modes and assumptions about human action and until recently have had primarily heuristic value.

The synthesis of rules theory and models of coorientational states enhances both. Studies of communication in coorientational states have described patterns of behavior for which the conceptualization of coorientation provides no explanation. A number of explanatory concepts have been developed in rules theory, but they have not been applied to the array of interpersonal relations described by coorientation models. By extending the concept of the "logic of conversation" from rules theory to coorientational states, the behavioral regularities already observed may be explained, and the "logic" made more useful.

COORIENTATIONAL THEORY AND MODELS

A person is "cooriented" when s/he has an affective or cognitive orientation simultaneously to an object/event and to another person perceived relevant to that object/event. Assuming that persons prefer "balanced" orientations, Newcomb (1947) explained the phenomenon of "autistic hostility." Newcomb noted that persons tend to avoid talking about topics they like with

persons they dislike, and about topics about which they think they disagree with persons they like. The result is a "protection" of negative sentiments against disconfirmation: once the decision is made that one dislikes another or disagrees on an important topic, persons tend to behave in ways which avoid forms of communication which exacerbate their differences. However, these behavior patterns also prevent discovery that the perceived dislike/disagreement is erroneous. Similarly, Heider (1958) explained patterns of interpersonal choice and perceptions by postulating a "strain toward symmetry" between unit (perceived interpersonal groupings) and sentiment (affective meanings) relations. Certain configurations of "A to B re X" systems were defined as balanced and thus preferable and/or stable. The explanatory power of Heider's "naive psychology" came from predictions that persons would avoid or change unbalanced states.

During the 1960's, Chaffee and McLeod (1968) initiated a substantial research effort based on their "measurement model" of coorientation. In its simplest form, the model postulated the existence of three relational variables (that is, each variable was defined by the comparison of two independent measurements), the combination of which was necessary to define the coorientational state of a two-person group (see Figure 1). Agreement was the comparison between one person's orientation toward an object/event and the other person's orientation (the model assumes, as a boundary condition, that both persons perceive each other as relevant to that object/event). Congruency was the comparison between one person's own orientation toward an object/event and his/her perception of the other's orientation. Accuracy was the comparison between one person's perception of the other person's orientation toward an object/event and the other's actual perception. Chaffee and McLeod were able to show that the configuration of these three relational variables was a better

descriptor of the relationship between communicators than any single variable, and that communication sometimes induces changes in e.g., accuracy, and other times in, e.g., agreement. The measurement model thus constitutes a more sensitive description of the antecedent and consequent conditions of communication than alternative models.

Stamm and Pearce (1974) argued that the Chaffee-McLeod coorientational model was limited, however, by being static (it measures these variables at a single point in time) and the fact that communication has no place in the model: it occurs "off-stage." Repeated application of the measurement model provides a series of "still photographs" of the dyad, but communication behavior, if any, must be inferred as the explanation of changes between measurements. Wanting to understand communication per se, Stamm and Pearce reconceptualized the model by adding process (e.g., the temporal sequence of messages in conversation) and by focusing on "congruency," the only relational variable which is intrapersonal and thus is known to the communicators (in the Chaffee-McLeod model, accuracy and agreement are known by the observer, not the participants). The resulting model is organized around a juxtaposition of an expectation (the old congruency measure) with a discrimination (the perception at a given time that the expectation was confirmed or not). The model dichotomizes the expectation into "predicted agreement" and "predicted disagreement," and the discrimination into "confirmed" and "disconfirmed," producing four "coorientational states" (see Figure 2). In the last of their co-authored papers, Stamm and Pearce (1974) summarized results from eight studies testing the "modest claim that the conditions defined by a process model of coorientation would account for differences in communication behavior that had not been previously observed" (p. 200). They concluded that the distinctions among these four coorientational states exposed behavioral regularities obscured by several

forms of "equilibrium theories" (e.g., Newcomb, Heider, Festinger, etc.). Specifically, communication behavior between the two confirmatory and disconfirmatory conditions differed, as expected, but also differed between the predicted agreement disconfirmed (PAD) and predicted disagreement disconfirmed (PDD) states in a way inexplicable from existing coorientational theory. Apparently both the "balance" of the dyadic system and the sequence of events which informs a person of that balance affect subsequent behavior.

The Stamm-Pearce process model of coorientation reached a cul-de-sac in which further demonstration of the differences in communication behavior in coorientational states was of little utility. There were conceptual and methodological inelegancies in the research--including a limitation of "agreement" to single cognitions, a definition of communication behavior which was mechanical and unable to discern subtilities, and comparatively weak designs and statistics--but the major problem, of which Stamm and Pearce were fully cognizant, was that neither the model nor the theory from which it was derived was adequate to explain why the observed behavioral regularities occurred, or to suggest the direction for the research.

RULES THEORY

The "coordinated management of meaning" (Pearce, 1976) is one of several attempts to explain interpersonal communication using the construct "rule" (see Pearce, 1978, for a detailed review and contrast of various "rules" perspectives). To some extent, identification of CMM with "rules" is a misnomer, because it is a multi-level structural theory. Dramatism is CMM's root-metaphor, and communicators--like actors in an improvisational theatre--are envisioned as milling about on a stage, provided a variety of props, and having been taught an array of script-lines, or "episodes" but not knowing what play is to be performed. The primary communication task is to find others with whom

one can perform those episodes which are necessary or desirable and then coordinating the enactment of those episodes with them.

The theory employs molar and molecular units of analysis simultaneously. In conversation, persons tack back and forth between 1) the definition of the episode which they and the other are performing (this is the molar unit of analysis, comprising the answer to "what are we doing with each other," such as "having coffee," "having a fight," "playing," etc.), and 2) the actual communicative behaviors and lower level meanings which they and the other produce (this is the molecular unit of analysis, comprising the content and relational meanings of verbal and nonverbal cues, such as "he called me a dope while smiling--that must be a 'friendly insult'"). When an actor is able to perceive an equivalence of "fit" between the sequence of messages and the molar definition of what is being done, the conversation is coherent. The conversation is coordinated if each person's meanings are similar enough for each, in turn, to produce messages which are coherent to the other.

Rules come in systems with definable and significant structural characteristics, and are representations of actor's cognitive processes in assigning meanings and determining what acts are appropriate. Rule systems thus describe the process by which actors link molar and molecular meanings (Pearce, Cronen and Conklin, in press).

CMM differs from other rules theories primarily by its conceptualization of the structure and function of rules (Cronen and Pearce, 1978; Pearce, 1978). According to CMM, 1) rules have existential referents rather than being simply an observer's inference. Although actor's may not be consciously aware of "rules," they can describe appropriate behavior, critique alternative behaviors and interpolate/extrapolate missing instances from strings of behavior. These abilities evidence the existence of unaware knowledge. 2) Rules have

differential structures, variations in which affect the "force" the rules exerts on behavior (see Figure 3). 3) Rules have the potential for "interlocking," such that the rule-guided act of one person becomes the "antecedent act" which invokes another person's rule, and so on.

CMM does not explain why behaviors occur by the simple specification of a rule. Rather, the theory involves the relationship between molar ("episodic") and molecular (particular messages) meanings, and postulates the structure of the rule system as determining the amount of "logical force" which constrains particular behavior. The description of rules thus constitutes data from which the primary explanatory concept--"logical force"--can be computed.

The "logic of conversation" is depicted in Figure 4 by the solid arrows and disjunctive implication sign ($\supset$). Due to the interlocking potential of rules, a conversation may be described by writing the rules of Persons A and B in parallel rows, out of phase with each other such that each person's act is comparable to the "intended consequent" of the other's previous rule and to the "antecedent act" of the other's subsequent rule. In coherent conversation, persons match the whole series of messages with the "script-line" of an episode, such that each "intended consequent" would be comparable to the "antecedent act" of his/her next rule. By specifying the structure of these rules, the amount of "logical force" can be determined--and precisely measured--as the inverse of the number of possibilities. At the molecular level, the amount of logical force is the inverse of the number of messages which may be produced as alternative ways of doing the episode: at the molar level, it is the inverse of the number of episodes. For example, logical force is much less when the rules specify that any of five acts may follow a given antecedent than if they describe only one legitimate act (Cronen, Kaczka, Pearce and Pawlik, 1978).

The computation of logical force in this way, however, is intrapersonal and works as long as the other person responds precisely as expected. However, the development of coorientational models demonstrates that this does not always happen, and the Stamm-Pearce research indicates that the most anomalous communication patterns occur when the expectations of the other are disconfirmed. The task of theoretical synthesis is thus an application of the concepts of rules theory to those situations in which the other's acts are surprising.

COORIENTATION AND THE LOGIC OF CONVERSATION

A synthesis may be achieved by first redefining coorientational states in terms of the logic of communication, then applying the explanatory principles of CMM. With reference to the structural model of a regulative rule in Figure 3, the expectation of the other is found in the "intended consequent." By using the vocabulary of speech acts to identify intended consequents, the "expectation" condition in coorientation may be expanded from a dichotomous "agree-disagree" to a multidimensional relationship of similarities and differences paralleling studies of how persons perceive others (Wish, Deutsch and Kaplan, 1976). The "discrimination" condition in coorientation denotes the comparison of what the other person did to what he was expected to do, and is located in Figure 4 by the double-headed broken arrows. The addition of this comparison, and the stipulation that the other's behavior may or may not be coherent (as defined above) with the previous matching of episode and sequence of messages, are important additions to CMM from coorientation.

Stamm and Pearce's (1974) studies of communication behavior in coorientational states manipulated the expectation-discrimination juxtaposition, and then observed the subsequent behavior. This procedure produced evidence that some form of differentiated selection procedure was occurring between the discrimination and the next act, but could not explain it except to speculate

about a pause while the actor redefined the "situation" in which s/he and the other were communicating. This suggestion now appears to be in the right direction but vague.

Given the function of rules as linking the actors' definitions of episode (molar meanings) and messages (molecular meanings) in a conversation, a disconfirmatory discrimination of the other's act compared to the intended consequent constitutes a disruption of coherency. We envision a process of searching among the repertoire of episodes for one which makes the unexpected act coherent. Further, the phenomenon of a disconfirmatory discrimination cannot be a rare one, and if not, then it is reasonable to assume that persons have rules for dealing with unanticipated consequents. The single-headed broken arrows in Figure 4 labeled "feedforward" function as place markers for these rule-governed decisions which affect "logical force." By a pattern of alternative pattern-matching, a person shifts from one rule-as-contexted-by-an episode to another, such that his/her subsequent behavior is a function both of the content and structure of the new rule and the fact that the rule is made relevant by an unexpected discrimination. For example, if a person is busily enacting the episode "casual chat," which has a given amount of logical force, and suddenly makes a disconfirming discrimination, s/he may redefine the episode as "business deal," but the logical force impinging on the next act will be that appropriate for "business deal" as modified by the "feedforward" representing the rule-governed response to being surprised or having had coordination problems. The "feedforward" most likely will affect the structure of the rule by increasing or reducing equifinality, functional autonomy, multifinality, etc., and thus affecting behavior by altering logical force. (For a discussion of these structural properties, see Cronen and Pearce, 1978; a measurement model and empirical test is reported in Cronen, Pearce

and Snavely, 1979).

The interface between coorientation and rules theory has produced the "triangular" structures in the model depicted in Figure 4 representing the relationship between expectations and discriminations where the consequents of one rule-governed act became the antecedent condition of the next. This revision of the model of the logic of conversation permits the concept of "logical force" to be applied to the previously demonstrated fact of differentiated communication behavior in various coorientational states. Whether this concept proves useful, of course, remains to be demonstrated by research. The remainder of this paper will describe a pilot study which attempted to operationalize some of the terms introduced above.

A PILOT STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine if the structure of the rules for what to say in particular instances in conversation differs if the person is in various coorientational states. The hypothesis was that the "feedforward" resulting from the coorientational states would affect the amount of logical force in the ensuing episode.

The rationale was straightforward: if we could place a group of subjects into an identical conversational circumstance, but with a difference in the coorientational state which was induced, a comparison of rule structures across coorientational states would reveal the difrerences in the logical force for enacting the same episode as affected by the "feedforward" of rules for dealing with confirmation/disconfirmation of expectations. The logical force of the episode per se would be controlled, the coorientational state manipulated and rule structure the dependent variable. We knew of no standard research protocol for this design, however, and ran a pilot study to check the operationalizations of the theoretical concepts.

PROCEDURE

MATERIALS

Coorientational states were manipulated by creating expectancies about how a conversant felt about issues, and showing a simulated conversation structured to confirm and disconfirm at different times those expectancies. Expectations were created by showing subjects video clips of two adult women, each conversing with a friend. A forced-choice questionnaire asked subjects to describe each of the women's and their own orientations toward two topics (spontaneity in vacations and watching televised sports). The conversations consisted of 12 messages, ostensibly between one of the women and her friend and about either sports or spontaneity. Each message was written on a 4" x 6" index card, and to control sequencing, the conversation was presented to the subject by the experimenter one card at a time. Two messages, #5 and #11, were deliberately designed to confirm and disconfirm, respectively, the expectations of agreement or disagreement. Two other messages, #6 and #12, were left blank: the subjects were to supply the content of what they would say in that situation.

The rules describing what to do in various coorientational states were measured by a structured interview, which was conducted twice for each of the two conversations for each subject. To facilitate this interview, subjects were trained to label messages as "speech acts" (cf. Searle, 1969), by describing the concept of speech acts, giving them a list of speech acts, showing them a video clip and a typed transcript of a conversation, and then working as a team (an interviewer and two subjects) to describe the conversation as a sequence of speech acts. (Note that it was not relevant whether the speech acts were "correctly" assigned: this procedure simply sensitized subjects to relational meanings--augmenting the manipulation of coorienta-

rional states--and gave them a vocabulary by which they and the interviewer could refer to particular messages.)

Four structural characteristics of rules and three manipulation checks were measured in the interview. All variables except equifinality and multifinality were measured by two 7-interval Likert-type scales (e.g., true-false; agree-disagree) following an assertion. Inter-item reliabilities were determined by performing Pearson product-moment correlations. Reliability was generally good overall and exhibited no discernable pattern of changes between sequential administrations: the highest coefficient was .99 and only one item in one time interval had a coefficient of less than .73.

The manipulation checks were the extent to which subjects perceived each conversant (Mrs. Black/White and her friend) as being in control of the conversation and a description of the extent to which Mrs. Black/White and her friend had understood each other. Rules were conceptualized as having a systemic organization of which four components were measured. Functional autonomy was assessed by asking if a particular act was appropriate regardless of the perceived consequent; and hierarchical integration was assessed by asking if the act "closely reflects who I am and what a person like me should do." Equifinality was assessed by asking subjects to describe the array of messages Mrs. Black/White's friend might say as message #6 or #12 in the conversation. To achieve a list reflecting their perception of appropriateness rather than verbal creativity, these steps were taken: 1) subjects were asked to list "as many messages as you think are realistically available"; 2) subjects labeled each message as a speech act; 3) subjects deleted messages which duplicated other messages; and 4) subjects crossed out any messages which Mrs. Black/White's friend "really would not do in a conversation like this." The measure of equifinality was the number of nonduplicative speech acts not

crossed out. Multifinality was assessed by asking subjects to list the speech acts which they thought Mts. White/Black might perform if her friend did each of the acts specified in the equifinality question.

SUBJECTS

Subjects were 21 undergraduates at an Eastern University. All subjects volunteered to participate when the authors came to their classes in Summer, 1978, and described the study.

METHOD

Students willing to participate in the study scheduled an appointment with the authors in one of the department's research labs. Subjects came to the lab two at a time and were met by one of the authors who administered the informed consent form, showed them a videotape and trained them to code conversations as speech acts, showed them the video clips of Mrs. Black and Mrs. White, administered the attitude questionnaire about spontaneity and sports, and--on the basis of the attitude questionnaire--assigned them to conditions permitting the manipulation of coorientational states.

Each subject was then taken to another room where they were met by an interviewer. The interviewers instructed the subjects to play the role of Mrs. Black/White's friend, and to be prepared to offer advice at some points in the conversation. The interviewers presented the conversation by placing one card at a time in front of the subject, who labeled each card as a speech act. After the fifth and after the eleventh message, the interviewer "stopped" the conversation and administered the questionnaire which checked the manipulations and measured rule structure. This procedure was repeated for a second conversation.

By assigning appropriate forms of the conversations and by attributing them to Mrs. Black or White, one conversation for each subject created the PAC and PAD conditions; the other, the PDC and PDD conditions. The sequence of conversations in which agreement and disagreement were predicted was systematically altered.

RESULTS

The manipulation checks were analyzed by analysis of variance. No significant differences were found as a function of coorientational state ($F=2.46$, $p=.2$ on the variable "did Mrs. Black/White and her friend understand each other very well?"). Subjects did perceive Mrs. White/Black to have differential amounts of control over the conversation as a function of coorientational state ($F=13.59$, $p < .01$), but coorientational state had no effect on perceptions of Mrs. White/Black's friend's control ($F=1.55$, $p=.22$).

The primary dependent variable was the rule structure governing the response to the discrimination which produced the coorientational state. The hypothesis that logical force would vary as a function of coorientational state was tested in two ways. First, a series of four analysis of variances tested for differences in functional autonomy, hierarchical integration, multifinality and equifinality in the coorientational states. No significant differences were found, with F-values of .23, 1.74, .32, and .10, respectively. Second, a MANOVA was used since these four variables were considered as components of a system. Again, no significant differences were found: the Hotellings test F value=.72 and the Wilks test F value =.72.

DISCUSSION

The integration of rules theory and coorientational research suggests the possibilities of extending both literatures. The synthesis makes it possible to escape the dichotomies built into the Stamm-Pearce process model

of coorientational states and provides a conceptual rationale for developing explanatory concepts and research protocols which will avoid the cul-de-sac which largely atheoretic model-building had produced. At the same time, the synthesis illuminates some of the intricacies of interpersonal communication which had been ignored by rules theory, prompting a further conceptualization of the "logic" of coherent, coordinated conversation.

This paper described the development of a model (see Figure 4) which subsumes the expectation-discrimination phenomenon on which coorientational models are built within an interpersonal, processual model in which rule systems mediate between molar and molecular definitions of the meanings of communication. The model is empirical in that it claims that these rules have existential status in the cognitive structure of actors, and that the structural properties of the rules produce a measurable and experienced "logical force."

The development of any theory is fraught with frustrations, in part because it usually entails an abandonment of established research protocols. The study reported here shows the awkwardnesses characteristic of a first attempt to operationalize concepts. As a pilot study, it has value by providing a first approximation of a procedure which might test the primary hypothesis derived from this theoretical synthesis: that communication behavior is constrained by the logical force resulting both from the structure of the episode and from the rules for handling particular sequences of expectations and discriminations. The present procedure obviously did not work, as a function of failure to manipulate the independent variable well enough. It seemed that the protocol produced variations in Mrs. Black/White's perceived control, but not Mrs. Black/White's friends' coorientational state, as the design required. The empirical requirements of this theory are exacting, although not in principle impossible.

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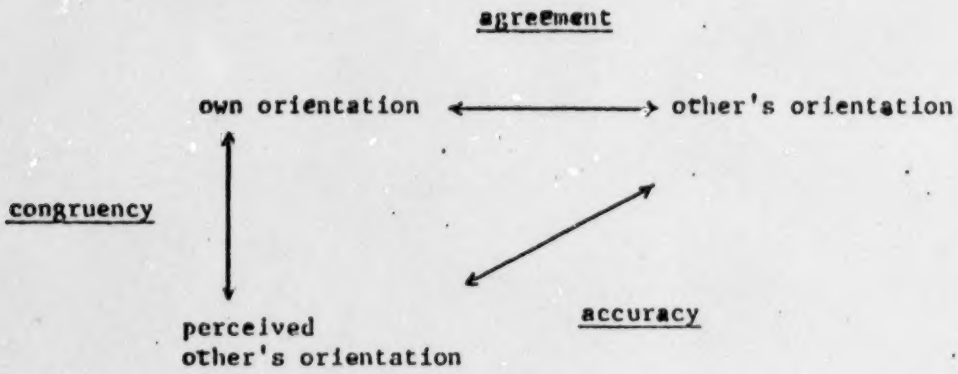

Figure 1: The Chaffee-McLeod measurement model of coorientation

expectation	discrimination	coorientational state
predicted agreement	confirmed	PAC
predicted agreement	disconfirmed	PAD
predicted disagreement	confirmed	PDC
predicted disagreement	disconfirmed	PDD

Figure 2: The Stamm-Pearce process model of coorientation

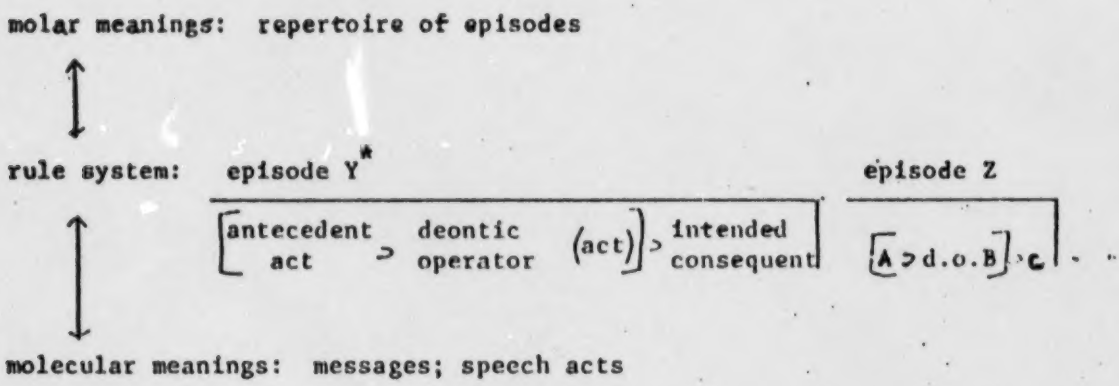

Figure 3: Structural properties and function of the rule system

* Read: in the context of episode Y, given a specified antecedent, it is obligatory/permitted to do a specified act, so that an intended consequent may occur. Note that the relative strength of the relationships within this model is an empirical question.

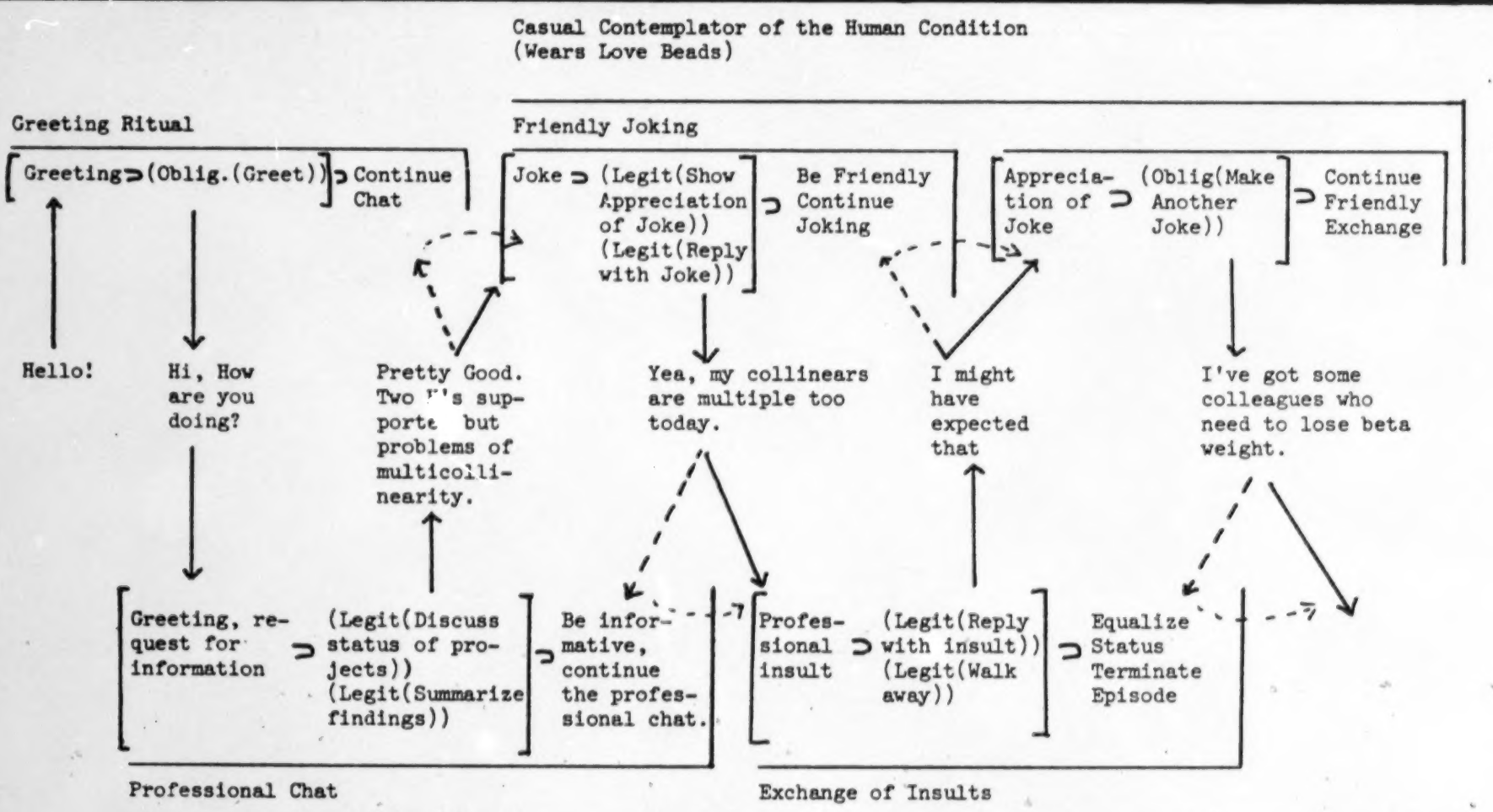
Casual Contemplator of the Human Condition
(Wears Love Beads)
Greeting Ritual
Friendly Joking
Greeting ⊃ (Oblig.(Greet)) ⊃ Continue Chat
Joke ⊃ (Legit(Show Appreciation of Joke)) (Legit(Reply with Joke)) ⊃ Be Friendly Continue Joking
Appreciation of Joke ⊃ (Oblig(Make Another Joke)) ⊃ Continue Friendly Exchange
Hello!
Hi, How are you doing?
Pretty Good. Two r's supporte but problems of multicollinearity.
Yea, my collinears are multiple too today.
I might have expected that
I've got some colleagues who need to lose beta weight.
Greeting, request for information ⊃ (Legit(Discuss status of projects)) (Legit(Summarize findings)) ⊃ Be informative, continue the professional chat.
Professional insult ⊃ (Legit(Reply with insult)) (Legit(Walk away)) ⊃ Equalize Status Terminate Episode
Professional Chat
Exchange of Insults
Hard-Nosed Communication Researcher
(Wears pocket calculator in Belt Holster)

Figure 4

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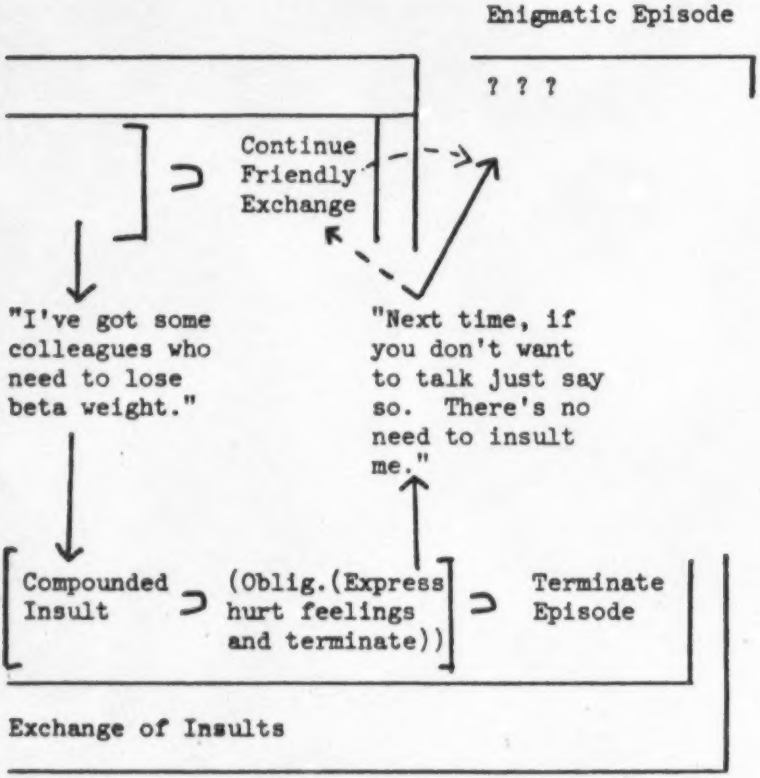
Enigmatic Episode
? ? ?
Continue Friendly Exchange
"I've got some colleagues who need to lose beta weight."
"Next time, if you don't want to talk just say so. There's no need to insult me."
Compounded Insult
(Oblig.(Express hurt feelings and terminate))
Terminate Episode
Exchange of Insults